



TORAH VEHA'ARETZ

INSTITUTE

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# Eating an *Etrog* and the *Segula* for an Easy Childbirth

## Eating the *etrog*

We see that the *etrog* was commonly eaten in the times of the Mishna and Talmud. The Mishna (Sukka 4:7) tells us that on Hoshana Raba, after having performed the mitzva of taking the *arba minim* for the last time and beating the *aravot*, תִּיד הַתִּינוּקוֹת שׁוֹמְטִין, “מִיָּד לולבֵיהֶן וְאֹכְלִין אֶתְרוּגֵיהֶן” - “Immediately, the children would throw away their *lulavim* and eat their citrons.” In the Gemara in Kiddushin (70a), R’ Nachman suggests that R’ Yehuda eat his *etrog*. It is pretty clear that the *etrog* was the first and most prominent citrus fruit in the Middle East.

The Gemara cites certain medicinal qualities of the *etrog* (*Shabbat* 109b), saying that eating a sweet *etrog* filled with honey is an antidote to poisonous snake bites. The Rambam writes that “the *etrog* peel strengthens the heart and its seeds serve as an antidote to poisons” (*Pirkei Moshe Barefu’a*).

## *Segula* for an easy childbirth

Today there is a popular *segula* for

an easy childbirth of eating *etrog* jam made from *etrogim* used for the *arba minim*, especially when great rabbis made a *beracha* on them. This *segula* is ascribed to Rabbi Rachamim Nissim Yitzchak Palagi (c. 1813-1907; Izmir, Turkey), son of the renowned Rabbi Chaim Palagi. The *segula* is associated with the opinion that the Tree of Knowledge was an *etrog* tree, and after Chava ate from it she was cursed with painful childbirth. It follows that eating an *etrog* that was used for a mitzva and blessed (especially by great rabbis) on Sukkot, and thereafter undergoes a sweetening process to turn it into jam, serves as a rectification for Chava’s sin and can help ease childbirth. ■



Photo: Rabbi Moshe Bloom